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UNCLAS LAGOS 001863

SIPDIS

PASS HHS FOR OGHA STEIGER/BHAT
CDC FOR BLOUNT/JANI/LEDUC/NCOX/ARTHUR
GENEVA FOR WHO
USDA/APHIS/US/NCIE FOR BURLESON
USDA/FSIS FOR RHARRIES
USDA/FAS/CMP/DLP FOR M FRANCOM

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [TBIO](#) [SENV](#) [EAGR](#) [AMED](#) [CASC](#) [EAID](#) [XX](#) [NI](#) [WHO](#) [FAO](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA CANNOT DETECT H5N1 AVIAN FLU

REF: A. STATE 216147 B. ABUJA 2234

1. Summary. AgAttache met with the acting director of Nigeria's Department of Agriculture and Pest Control Services to discuss the GON's plan for contending with an outbreak of AI. Senior GON policymakers are keenly aware that an AI outbreak would very likely destroy Nigeria's poultry industry, given the country's absence of basic safeguard systems in most poultry operations across Nigeria. Nigeria has no national facility that can either detect or diagnose H5N1 avian influenza. End summary.

2. U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) attach met with Dr. Junaidu A. Maina, acting director of Nigeria's Department of Agriculture and Pest Control Services, which is under the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, in Abuja on December 1. AgAttache presented demarche (first ref) on Nigeria's ban of poultry products allegedly in connection with avian influenza (AI), and discussed the ministry's role in the Government of Nigeria's (GON) plan (second ref) for contending with an outbreak of AI. The GON's Department of Agriculture and Pest Control Services has primary responsibility for animal disease control and management at Nigeria's federal level. Dr. Maina is the GON's Chief Veterinarian Officer.

3. On October 24, 2005, the GON established a general ministerial committee consisting of the Ministers of Agriculture, Health, and Science and Technology; leaders of the Nigerian House of Representatives and Senate; representatives of the World Health Organization and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization; and Nigeria's director general of state security. The GON tasked the committee with developing a national action plan to combat AI. Subsequently, respective ministries formed technical sub-committees of their own to draft specific recommendations and action plans for consideration by the general committee. In the case of the Ministry of Agriculture, its technical committee, which consists of animal-disease experts and other technical experts, is still in the process of drafting specific recommendations for consideration.

4. According to Chief Veterinarian Maina, senior GON policymakers are keenly aware that an AI outbreak would very likely destroy Nigeria's poultry industry, given the country's absence of basic safeguard systems in most poultry operations across Nigeria. This is because the Ministry of Agriculture lacks the necessary resources to establish effective control measures against AI.

5. Maina also said that the Ministry of Agriculture maintains 12 wetland surveillance stations throughout the country where migratory birds are known to populate each year. The Ministry of Agriculture sends samples from these locations to the National Veterinary Research Institute (NVRI) in Jos, Plateau State. The NVRI has diagnostic facilities that can detect the presence of AI. That laboratory, however, has no facility that can characterize technically the disease by its various strains -- for example, low pathogenic or highly pathogenic. Nigeria thus currently has no national facility that can either detect or diagnose H5N1 avian influenza.

6. Despite its membership in and commitments to the World Trade Organization, Nigeria banned in July 2002 the import of poultry products to protect its growing poultry industry. The GON then in June 2004 banned the import of eggs and day-old chicks under the guise of fears associated with AI. Some poultry imports, albeit in small quantities, continue to be smuggled into Nigeria through its border towns.

7. Post will continue to pursue the GON for the removal of import restrictions on poultry and other products, and monitor and report on the government's capability to respond to an outbreak of AI.

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